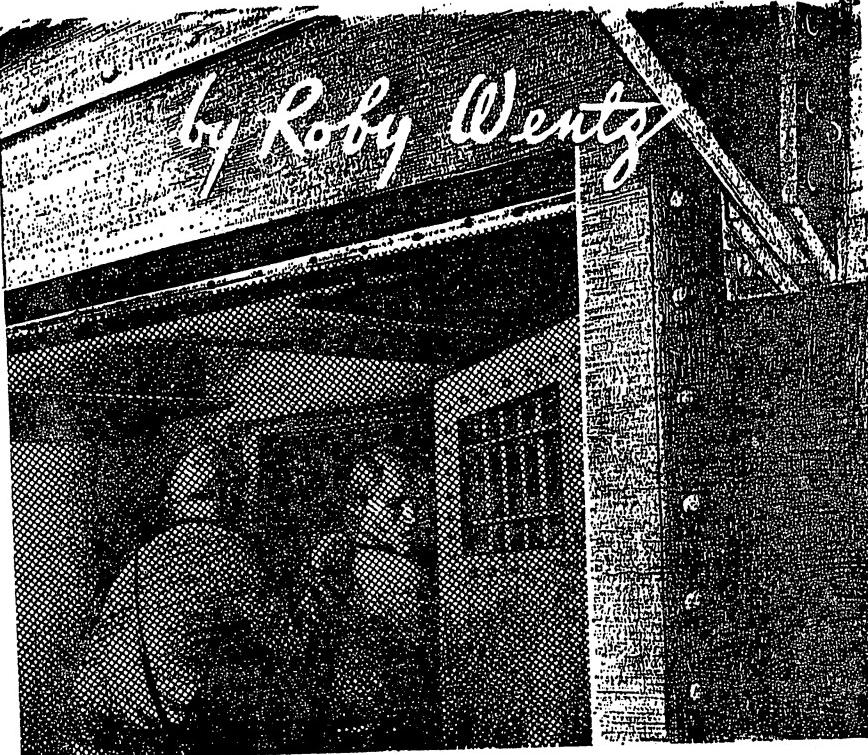


Edge

Hansen



THE Los Angeles County jail guard ushered Frank Jeremy into the visitors' room and indicated to him the blonde woman in the flowered hat.

"Five minutes, Jeremy," he said, and retreated to a chair against the wall.

A steel framework with heavy fine steel netting stretched upon it from floor to ceiling divided the room into equal halves. Desk-like wooden

compartments, with polished hollow black spots where countless elbows had rested, flanked the heavy wire barrier along either side.

Jeremy, a handsome prematurely-gray man wearing the washed-blue, lysol-scented denims of the prison, sank into a steel chair, trying to control the trembling of his entire body.

He lifted his eyes and looked at the blonde woman.

"Hello, darling," he said, in a

Based on a radio script originally written
for the CBS radio program Suspense

By ROBERT L. RICHARDS

careful voice.

Her face was nearly hidden from him by the flaring brim of the frivolously-garnished hat, and she held a tiny ball of handkerchief against one eye. At his greeting, she sniffled, and a spasm shook her shoulders.

Jeremy's face twitched.

"Take it easy, darling," he murmured tightly.

The hat-brim lifted; she looked at him out of tear-bright blue eyes. Jeremy met her eyes and made his lips smile.

Eve Jeremy had the blonde beauty of a silent-pictures movie star. It was a delicate, almost childish face, the lips a red cupid's-bow, the little nose as neat as if a magazine artist had drawn it. Long lashes framed the blue eyes. She was tall, and she wore a crisp simple white linen frock.

"Oh, Frank . . . !"

"There, there now, sweet . . . we don't have much time."

"I know, Frank. But . . . to have to talk to you this way, through an iron screen . . . I can't even touch you . . ."

"Sure, darling. Maybe it's better, that way."

"When are they taking you—I mean, when do you——"

Jeremy gritted his teeth; the muscles of his jaws bunched in his cheeks.

"Go to San Quentin?" he said, after a moment, hyperconscious of his heart's stepped-up beat. "In a couple of days, they tell me."

Without warning, sobs overflowed from her. She dropped her head on

the scoured wood, careless of the crumpling hat-brim. "Oh, Frank . . . Frank!" she wailed. "This—it . . . can't be true!"

Jeremy's body tautened; his hands clenched into fists and his brows drew down in a supreme effort.

"Damn it, darling!" he burst out, "you're not making it any easier!"

"I know, I know, Frank." She sighed shudderingly. "Okay," she said, a moment later. "I'll be good."

She smiled wanly at him through the netting.

Jeremy grinned with tight lips.

"It's just," she said, after a moment, "that I still can't—I refuse, even now—to believe that you had anything to do with killing her. The thought that you're about to—to die, for something you didn't do. . . . it comes over me, and . . . I just . . . well, that's what happened, just now."

"Sure," the man said.

"You're so calm, Frank."

He laughed. "I better be. I can't crack up, now. I got to live with myself for three weeks more, Eve."

"Three weeks!"

He nodded.

"Frank," she said, "what am I going to do?"

He looked surprised. "Why, darling, you're going to be taken care of. There's the insurance, and the bonds." He grimaced wryly. "Of course, it won't keep you in the style you've—we've been accustomed to. But you'll manage, darling, won't you?"

He smiled sadly. "There may even

be some other lucky guy, after a while."

"Oh, darling—I wasn't worrying about living! Only—"

"I'm the one who's worried about living," he said, his smile askew.

"Don't joke, Frank!"

"All right," he said. "It helps, though. You'd be surprised."

"I just can't think; is all. When I think of giving up our beautiful pent-house, and the life we've had, though—of course, the pent-house is meaningless without you . . ."

"Yeah," he said, tonelessly. "Hear from anyone at the studio?" he asked.

"No—the freeze. I guess Continental Pictures is trying to forget you were their Producer Frank Jeremy less than three months ago."

"Well," he said, "you can't blame them, I suppose. After all, they figure it was me killed their number one star."

She seemed to be thinking.

"Frank," she burst out, suddenly, with an intensity that caused his blank eyes to widen. "Three weeks—you said three weeks . . . ?"

He nodded.

"Frank, I'm going to do something!"

His forehead knitted. "Do what, Eve?"

She leaned toward him. "I don't know. Something! We've got three weeks, Frank!"

"Sure. And my lawyers had two months, and they couldn't do anything for me."

The guard shifted his legs and

cleared his throat.

"One minute, Mrs. Jeremy."

"Don't you realize," she said fiercely in a low harsh voice, "there's a murderer loose somewhere—someone running around free, having fun—the one who did the thing you're going to die for! Frank . . ." she dropped her voice to a whisper ". . . did you tell the lawyers everything?"

He eyed her. "Why . . . darling?"

"Listen, Frank, I know that you went up to that cabin. I know you were there after it happened."

"Don't talk so loud, Eve!"

"There must have been something," she whispered. "You must have seen something in that cabin—found something."

"Suppose I had. My whole defense was that I hadn't been there. But there was nothing important, when I was there, even so."

"Whoever was there before you must have left some trace. Try to think, Frank."

He let his breath out in a long, harassed sigh.

"It's no use, Eve."

"Frank . . . any chance . . . ?"

He looked at her. The guard had risen from his chair and was watching them.

"If it'll make it any easier for you to get through the time that's left," Jeremy began.

"Oh, Frank . . . is there . . . ?"

"There was her address book," Jeremy said softly. "It was lying on a table——"

"Frank! Why didn't you tell me . . . ?"

"Listen! It was open to the letter 'J', and my name was in it. So I took it. Seemed like a smart thing to do, just then. It's in the secret drawer, in my desk in the alcove. And one other thing . . ."

The guard was walking toward them.

"Yes, Frank . . .?"

"A smell—"

The guard's heavy unemotional voice cut in. "Time's up, Mrs. Jeremy."

"What?"

"Cigar smoke."

She stood up. "Frank, I'll write—I'll write every day." She smiled. "We're not going to stop living in pent-houses, darling."

"It's not living in penthouses I'm worried about, baby," Frank Jeremy said. The guard took him by the elbow, and steered him toward the door. The steel portal opened, and he looked back.

Eve half-lifted a white hand in goodbye.

Jeremy vanished. The steel door closed solidly behind him.

LIETE NANT Trout of the Homicide Bureau looked like someone's kindly uncle who did yard-heeling on the side. His desk bore the scars of innumerable burned-out cigar-butts, and his vest the ashes from the most recent of them. His voice, when he addressed Eve Jeremy, was polite and careful.

"Now, Mrs. Jeremy, what's it about?"

She told him. "He's my husband," she said, tremulously. "I love him. I know he's innocent and I'm going to do something about it."

"What, for example?"

"I—I have some new evidence."

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

Eve raised her large childlike blue eyes from the floor and looked at him.

"I guess I don't quite know," she confessed. "I came to you, because—well, you seemed to be one policeman who tried to be fair when they arrested Frank."

Trout bit the end from a fresh cigar and lit it without disturbing the relics of the last one. He contemplated the burning tip, and then swung his gaze again on Eve Jeremy.

"You know, Mrs. Jeremy, it's a little touching, this sudden selfless consecration to saving your husband's life, this perfect love you say you have for him."

She flushed darkly.

"What do you mean by that crack?"

"Of course, you understand that the investigation of Lorna Moore's murder covered you, yourself, Mrs. Jeremy, considering that you and Mr. Jeremy have been married only since April—about eight months."

The blue eyes were ice-cold.

"So you investigated. So what?"

"So, we found out what kind of record you've got in San Francisco. We—well, turned up a couple of little peccadilloes of yours right here in town, since you've been Mrs.

Jeremy. Your husband obviously didn't know about 'em, and they had no bearing on the case, so I let 'em go. Your own business."

She regarded him steadily. "As you say, they had no bearing on Frank's innocence or guilt. Why bring them up now?"

"Oh, nothing. I just wanted you to know, Mrs. Jeremy, that we're not dumb here. Jeremy's the best meal-ticket you've ever had. If you're crazy about that penthouse on Sunset, I don't blame you. If he dies, you'll lose it. As a motive, that makes more sense to me than your undying, eight-month-old love."

"So you're a smart cynical cop," Eve said. "It's wonderful."

"It helps," he said. "Well, what's your evidence?"

"What kind of evidence," she countered, "do I need—how specific?"

"To upset a first degree murder rap? Something in writing. Or a picture. Something that definite."

"I haven't got anything like that."

"Got a suspect?"

"Not yet."

Trout considered her cool linen-clothed perfection.

"As far as the State's concerned," he said, finally, "The case is closed. Any help I gave you would be strictly out of school." He waited another moment, and said again. "What do you want?"

Eve drew a deep breath.

"I want a dictaphone installed," she said.

"Where? In your palatial pent-

house?"

"No," tranquilly, "in my new apartment."

She ignored his raised eyebrows and wise lips. "It's on Fairfax. The landlady calls me Mrs. Jarvis—Evelyn Jarvis."

Trout stood up. "Write down the address," he said. "I'll be up this afternoon to install it."

"Thank you, Lieutenant," Eve said sweetly. "I'll be expecting you."

"Goodbye, Mrs. Jeremy. You're really bucking for that penthouse, aren't you?"

"Did you ever spend ten years in a hall bedroom?" said Eve Jeremy. "Goodbye, Lieutenant."

IT WAS five-fifteen, and Sanchez, the bartender at the Vine Street Derby, saw that Mr. Jerry Jordan was finishing his second Scotch-and-soda on schedule. It was time for number three. That would take Mr. Jordan up to five-thirty. Sanchez, a methodical man, who was never at a loss for the limes, the bitters, or a liqueur glass along his well-kept stretch of bar, approvingly prepared a third mixture of Vat 69 and White Rock and started toward Jerry Jordan with it.

"Mister Jerry Jordan, telephone plee-uz," said the girl's voice, flat and genteel, from the public address outlet, "Mister Jerry Jordan, telephone, plee-uz . . ."

Jerry Jordan eased a pair of long legs and a lean torso, the whole tastefully draped in white sharkskin,

off a bar stool, turned a pleasing set of tanned features toward the men's lounge, where the Derby maintains its phone facilities, and set his athletic frame in motion, to an accompaniment of approving glances from several women.

Sanchez was left holding the drink. He frowned, looked at the clock, finally deposited it on the bar alongside Jordan's empty glass.

Jordan propped himself against the wall beside the instrument and took down the receiver.

"Hello," he said.

"Oh—is this Mr. Jerry Jordan?" asked a girl's voice.

Mr. Jordan allowed that it was.

"Well!" said the girl's voice, eloquent with relief, "I've finally found you!"

"Lucky me," murmured Mr. Jordan. "You finally have."

"Can't you guess who this is?"

"I'm just trying and trying, and getting nowhere at all."

"Oh, well," the girl sighed, "I guess I'll have to tell you. This is Evelyn Jarvis."

"I'm still trying," Jordan said.

"Don't you know who I am?"

"I'm sorry to be such a disappointment to you, Miss—er—Jarvis. No, frankly, I don't."

"Well, but—oh, this is embarrassing! Didn't you get the letter?"

"Was there a letter?"

"Oh, my goodness! Well, a very good friend of yours, who's also a very good friend of mine, wrote you about me, or at least he said he was going—"

"Are you pretty?" asked Jerry Jordan.

"What . . . ? Oh, dear—that's what they said you'd be like!"

Evelyn Jarvis' voice was prettily scandalized.

"Umm," said Jordan, but he sounded complacent.

"I'll give you one other clue—I'm from out of town."

"Not San Francisco."

"We-e-ell . . ."

Jordan laughed. "Good old Ed Thornton," he said. "He always did have a terrible memory for everything except telephone numbers and cocktail recipes."

"Ed said to look you up as soon as I got in town," the voice of Evelyn Jarvis trilled, "I hope I'm not interrupting anyth—"

"Well, where are you staying?" asked Jordan goodhumoredly.

"Oh, I found a little place . . ."

"You must have something," said Jordan. "What are you doing for dinner?"

"Why, I haven't really thought . . ."

"Why don't you have dinner with me?"

"Well, really, Mr. Jordan . . ."

"Now, now. Any friend of Ed Thornton's has certain standards to live up to. Don't let old Ed down. You just jump in a taxi and tell him the Vine Street Derby. I'll be waiting."

"Well, all right, then . . ."

"Swell!" He grinned at the mouthpiece. "Don't be long."

"That's the great Welles." "I thought he wore a beard."

"That was years ago," said Jordan laughing.

They finished their second round of cocktails, disposed of the introductory dishes, and attacked their steaks.

"It's delicious," she said, chewing rapturously. "Jerry—do you know any of these famous people?"

He shook his head. "Hardly any. Frankly, I've never gone around with the picture crowd. I couldn't even get you on to a sound stage to watch the shooting."

She made a little grimace of scorn. "I always thought it was pretty silly, all this worship of stars. Still . . . Hollywood must be a sort of exciting town to live in."

"Hollywood can be a deadly dull town to live in. It has its moments, though. We'll cover a couple of night spots, later on . . ."

"I'd love to . . . Jerry, I'm glad I'm going with you . . ." She gave him the upswept look.

"So am I," said Jerry Jordan, feeling the breathless sensation again.

She giggled. "I'm glad that way, too. But what I meant was, from what I hear about what goes on, in some of the places . . ."

Jordan laughed. "That's newspaper talk. Oh, there's a one-punch fist-fight now and then, occasional rows—"

"And, sometimes, a little weentsy murder!" She laughed merrily.

He laughed too. "You mean the Lorna Moore business?"

"Well, that was *one*."

"That was a tragedy, all right."

"Did you ever see Lorna Moore in the flesh, Jerry?"

He signalled the waiter to bring the check, before he answered.

"Well, as a matter of fact, Lorna was one of the few celebrities I *did* know."

"Really . . . ?"

"Mm-hm. And it may sound like a tough thing to say, but I kind of have an idea that she brought it on herself."

"How do you mean, Jerry?"

"Well," he said, "Lorna was a long way from being the sweet little trick she always played on the screen. She had habits that would have brought 'em out of their chairs, drooling, in Terre Haute."

She was wide-eyed.

"Her habits must have gotten too much for—for someone," she said, in a low voice.

"For Frank Jeremy, you mean?" Jordan nodded.

"Do you think he did it?"

"There was that note asking him to meet her at the cabin, and the key to the place they found in his car."

"I guess he was guilty, all right," she agreed brightly. "Well, he's only got two weeks more before he pays for it. I wonder how he feels, sitting up there in a cell at San Quentin. I'll bet he wishes he'd never seen Hollywood."

Jerry Jordan toyed with his fork. She fished in an oversized handbag. "Oh, darn—no cigarettes!"

Jerry, can I have one of yours?"

"Why, shore, honey—waiter!" He signalled. "What kind'll you have?"

"Oh, don't do that. I'll smoke whatever kind *you* have."

"Yes, sir?" queried the attendant.

"Package of cigarettes—Camels all right?"

"Mm-hm."

"Camels," the waiter said, and departed.

"Is that your brand?" she asked.

"My brand? No—no, I only smoke cigars. Care for one?"

"I don't think so, right now. May be later, after we're old friends."

"What are we now, Evelyn? Ah —cigarettes *and* the check!" He dispensed with a bit of monetary greenery that brought effusive thanks from the waiter.

6 **A**ND NOW, Evelyn Jarvis, "said Jerry Jordan, "There is a small matter at Ciro's I must attend to. Or shall we make it the Mocambo?"

He got to his feet and smiled down at her. For this, he told himself, you can go, Jerry. It's odd, and *very* interesting—this blend of sophisticated package and little-girl personality.

He knew the extra drink he felt sloshing around in him had something to do with how he felt and didn't care.

"Let's have that upswept look once more, baby," he said. "For a foundation under the evening. I think—I really think—this is going to be a

big night!"

She gave him the look, with special effects, as he held her wrap for her.

IN A CELL in the death house in San Quentin prison, Frank Jeremy, flat on his back in a prison bunk, stared at the whitewashed ceiling with wide-open eyes.

And in Jerry Jordan's apartment, in one of the better addresses on Whitley Heights, later that evening, Eve Jeremy, alias Evelyn Jarvis, and Jerry Jordan seasoned their newborn friendship with a cocktail of Mr. Jordan's own mixing.

A week later, the scene was the same; so were the principal characters, so were the cocktails. The mood, however, had changed.

"Thinking?" she asked him.

Jerry Jordan swirled his drink in its glass with morose concentration.

"Mm."

She allowed for a suitable pause and then asked: "Jerry—is something the matter?"

"No, no—nothing's the matter, baby."

"Something is, though." She smiled kindly at him.

"I don't know."

"What is it?"

"I don't know . . . Sometimes it's like you were kidding me—having some kind of secret."

"Jerry . . ." Her voice was tender, "you know I couldn't have any secrets from you."

"Well," he said, irritably, "why do

we always have to meet at the Derby? Why can't I pick you up at your place once in a while?"

"Maybe I like the Derby because—it's where I first met you." She caught her lower lip with white even teeth, and looked speculatively at him. Jordan intercepted the look and made a quick gesture of irritation.

"You see? You haven't answered me. And what about San Francisco? First you were only here for a few days. Then you were staying longer . . ."

"Because you asked me to, Jerry. Hasn't it been . . . nice?"

"God, baby—it's been so damned nice I'm not very sure of anything anymore!" He stood up and walked to a long window overlooking Hollywood. "This isn't my usual pitch, baby. When I fall, I fall easy and bounce back fast. Until now. I'm out of character in this production."

"Maybe I'm not going back to San Francisco," she said. "Maybe," she added, with a sudden cold firmness which escaped him, "I'm never going back."

He swung around.

"You see—you still haven't told me. I don't know anything about you, Evelyn. For all I know, you might be married to someone up there."

"Don't you think that's a kind of tough thing to say to me, after — everything, Jerry?" she asked, quietly.

"Okay, baby—I'm sorry. It's only that—well, you know."

She stood up, and came to him.

"I know," she said, and put her

hands on his tailored shoulders. "Will it make you feel any better if I let you pick me up at my place—tomorrow night?"

His arms went around her for answer.

"You can pick me up right now, too," she whispered.

A little later, she gave him the Fairfax Avenue address.

"Around six," she said.

TH E BUZZER whirred, and Eve Jeremy pressed the button that released the front door lock. She clicked on the little radio on the end-table beside the low couch, and music spilled softly into the room.

She wore a black dress with sleeves to the wrist and a neckline that would have commanded attention without its trim of powder-blue lace.

She heard the elevator doors at the end of the corridor open and close. When the bell in the kitchen rang, she walked steadily to the door and opened it.

"Jerry, darling!"

She smiled invitingly, and motioned him into the little livingroom.

"This is it. Nothing to get excited about, now was it?"

Jerry Jordan did not return her smile. He stood in the hall, his face unmoving, eyeing her and the room behind her.

Her smile melted away under his scrutiny. Her brows contracted for a moment, and then she tried an embarrassed little laugh.

"Well, come on in—I mean—is

something . . . ?"

He spoke in a flat dead voice.

"Ed Thornton got into town this morning, baby."

He watched as her face paled perceptibly.

"I see," she said.

He came into the room, and looked around, at its rented primness.

"He's never heard of you, baby." He stood at the window and talked without turning his head. "He doesn't know anybody named Evelyn Jarvis, or anyone that even looks like you."

She picked up a cigarette, clicked a lighter.

"All right, Jerry," she said levelly, "no one's holding a gun on you to keep you here."

As he turned to her, his face twisted, she added "It's been—well, sweet; but I guess this ends it."

"Damn it, baby!" He was across the room to her side. "You know it's been a little more than just something else! My God, I've even thought about us getting married. Me, Jerry Jordan . . . ! Now I don't know what to think."

"Except that I'm not what I seem to be."

"The hell with what you seem to be!" he said savagely. "I want you, I've got to have you, Evelyn—. Always. I guess it comes out that I care more about that than I do about who you are or what you are."

"What are we doing, standing here, yelling our heads off at each other, with the door standing wide open?" She laughed, softly. "Shall

we sit down, Jerry?"

She closed the door, came back and drew him down beside her on the couch, so that he was sitting along side the radio.

He lay back against the cushions.

"Evelyn . . . "

"Yes, Jerry?"

"You're not the only one who's been holding out."

She leaned across him, her hair brushing his cheek, and turned the dial on the radio. She did not switch it off, but the music ceased.

"Now we can hear ourselves." She settled back against the couch, her body turned toward him. "You were saying, Jerry?"

"I've got something to tell you, baby."

"Oh?" Her voice was politely interested. She waited.

He made a sudden move to get to his feet, and she put out a quick, gentle white hand, restraining him.

"Don't move, dear. I want you here. Now—what is this, hmm?"

He turned tortured eyes on her.

"For one thing, baby, I'm not Jerry Jordan. I'm Gerald Anthony Stephens Jordan, Third. I own a twenty-seven-room house out in Bel-Air full of phony Spanish furniture that gives me the wheepling meemies and a beach place up at Carmel and a lodge at Arrowhead and a flock of oil-wells my old man couldn't suck dry before he died and I've always been deathly afraid of promoters and good-time ladies, and—well, does any of it make any sense?"

He was staring at the floor as he

finished; but anyone watching her face, watching her expression alter as he ground out the words, would have said that it made sense to Evelyn Jarvis—or Eve Jeremy.

She stood up, stepped to the end-table on which the radio stood and took a cigarette from it. She flipped the switch that cut off the radio before she sat down again.

He searched her face as he held the match for her.

She exhaled smoke and smiled.

"So you're afraid of big bad gold-diggers, Jerry-boy?"

"Evelyn . . . ! I didn't mean —"

"I don't know what uniform gold-diggers are wearing this season." She smiled. "That's up to you, Jerry."

He gripped her hand so tightly she winced faintly. "Whatever it is, baby, you're not wearing it."

"Well, then," she said, lightly, "we've settled that. I'm not a gold-digger, on the word of Mr. Jordan, who is an expert in gold-diggers." Her expression altered swiftly. "Do you understand, I love you! Do you understand that?" A faint teasing note returned to spice the new warmth of her voice as she went on swiftly "Even if you're rich. Jordan—even so, I love you. That make sense, dearest?" She leaned toward him, lips parted.

He regarded her miserably.

Her eyes widened a little. "Well—you've made your confession like a man, darling. The horrible truth is out; you're rich. I know the worst. Relax, sweet . . . "

He shook his head.

"You don't understand, Evelyn. It wouldn't work out for us."

She leaned back, watching him in puzzlement.

"I'm a little at a loss, darling. I thought you loved me, and I love you, and that's all there is to it . . ."

"You don't know the half of it." He jumped to his feet. "I'm not doing any good here. Evelyn—we've got to wind it up."

"Is there—something else, Jerry?"

He nodded miserably.

"Well, then—tell me. I'm hard to shock—darling . . ."

"That's what you think." He made a gesture of termination. "Well, baby—it was swell." His voice shook; he turned toward the door.

"Jerry!"

At the hard strength of her tone, he gave her a startled look. "What . . . ?"

"Jerry, you killed Lorna Moore."

"I—I" He seemed to gasp for air to talk with. "You—how . . ."

"I know you killed Lorna Moore, Jerry."

He faced her again. "All right," he said. "It was me. I'm a murderer, Evelyn."

"Jerry," she said swiftly, "you're no ordinary man. And Jerry—I'm no ordinary woman. Customs, taboos—they don't frighten me, Jerry. It's people that interest me. You're not a murderer, Jerry. No—she held up a white hand as he started to speak—"let me finish. If you'd killed ten Lorna Moores, that wouldn't make you a murderer. Murderers are born,

Jerry, not made. I know about Lorna; I knew it the first night I met you. Don't ask me how I knew. Call it a woman's intuition. Something in the tone of your voice when you talked about her, the shrug of your shoulders. It doesn't matter."

"Evelyn . . ."

"Since we met, I've learned a lot about Lorna Mooré. I know how she was two-timing you—you and half a dozen others. Like—like that Frank Jeremy." She paused a brief instant. "It could have been any one of them. It happened to be you. I don't doubt Jeremy came there to kill her, too. You—well, you beat him to it, that's all."

He pressed big, clenched fists against his eyes. "Evelyn—I don't know—I don't know. All I know is—I killed her and another man's about to die for it, and—Oh, God, Evelyn, I can't let him . . . !"

Her arms were around him. "Jerry, Jerry! I can't let *you*! I'm in this, now, too. I love you, Jerry, do you understand that, once and for all?"

His embrace was crushing. "Evelyn—I want you so! I've got to have you,, Evelyn!"

"Oh, Jerry Jordan," she crooned, softly, reproachfully. "Haven't you seen how I loved you from the beginning? Can't you understand how little difference it makes, to me?"

He stood back, regarding her with wonder.

"Honestly, Evelyn . . . ?"

"You crazy guy," she said tenderly. "How soon will you marry me?" "Oh, Evelyn!"

She let the lashes slide up, slowly, revealing the wide blue eyes of a child who knows too much and revels in its knowledge.

"Kiss me," she said, leaning toward him, offering herself.

He crushed her against him and she moaned a little in his arms. When they came apart he stared at her wonderingly.

"It's as though I were doing it for the first time," he said, amazed.

"It'll be like the first time—every time—you and I, Jerry." Her red lips curved in an intimate smile. Then, as the man's lips reached eagerly for her mouth again, she was suddenly brisk.

"No, no, sweet. Not now. Later. We'll have so much time . . . later. Listen, dear—let's leave, *now!*"

"Baby!" His eyes shone. "We can be in Mexico City tomorrow morning."

She rose, in a single quick movement. "I'll throw a couple of things in a bag."

Jordan was on his feet.

"This is the way I like things!" he said. "I know a lad who'll get me plane tickets." He snapped his fingers. "Baby, you and me are going places."

"In Mexico City," she said, laughing, "we're going to a priest—first."

"You bet we are, baby. Think I'd take any more chances on losing you?"

She kissed him lightly. I'll pack."

She was back in a very few moments.

Jordan laid down the telephone.

"Okay on the tickets," he nodded, forming an "O" with forefinger and thumb. "Let's get going."

"Wait," she said.

"We only have forty-five minutes to get to Burbank and claim the reservations . . ."

"Come on—someone just left the elevator. I heard the door slam."

Jordan picked up the bags and opened the door. Then he stared.

Lieutenant Trout smiled at the two people in the apartment.

"Good evening, Mrs. Jeremy," he said.

He looked at Jordan, then back at Eve. "Nice job you did on your hair," he said, pleasantly. He came into the room.

"Hello," said Eve, in a faraway voice.

Jordan said nothing.

"Taking a little trip?" Trout said, brushing the luggage with his eyes.

Jordan set the bags on the floor. His eyes darted from Trout to the woman and back again.

Eve Jeremy spoke. "Wouldn't you, if you were me?" she said, casually.

"Sure," Trout said. "I know how you feel. In a hurry?"

"Sort of. My friend here was going to run me down to the airport. Lieutenant Trout—Mr. Jordan."

Trout nodded. "Well, I won't keep you but a minute. Then we'll give you a fast trip down there in a squad car."

Eve said nothing. Trout called into the corridor. "Flood?"

"Yo!" responded a heavy voice. Trout turned to Jordan. "Mind

stepping into the hall a second, while I talk to Mrs. Jeremy?"

Jordan hesitated a second. Then, dumbly, he stepped out. Trout closed the door after him.

"Your—friend know what you've been doing?" he inquired.

"In a way," Eve said, watching him.

Trout picked up the radio from the end table and hefted it.

"Any luck with our little gadget?" he asked, grinning slowly, as if it were a private joke between them.

She shook her head.

"I've never had any reason to turn it on. I've failed, Lieutenant. I tried, but . . ." She shrugged.

Trout sighed. "Tough," he said. He walked over to the portieres beside the window, reached behind them, and extracted a tiny black object.

Eve gasped. Her hand flew to her lips.

Trout turned to look at her. He was smiling, as he pulled a small plastic rool from his pocket.

"This one worked fine," he said. "Quite an interesting conversation you two had." He regarded her

gravely.

"Your husband will be a free man tomorrow, Mrs. Jeremy, thanks to your deep, abiding affection for him," he said.

He became brisk, "Well, I guess that's all we need to know, isn't it?"

"I guess it is," Eve said, tightly. "I told you I'd get him, didn't I, Lieutenant?"

Trout looked at her, and shook his head.

"Sometimes I wonder why I never got married," he said, lightly.

He opened the door and spoke into the hall. "Take him down to the car, Flood."

He looked at Eve thoughtfully. "I ought to make you tell him goodbye," he said.

"Goodbye, Lieutenant," Eve Jeremy said. "Be sure and send me back my husband—quick."

"What a lucky guy *he* is," Trout said.

He walked out of the apartment, leaving the door ajar, whistling. The tune floated back to her from the hallway—"Alone in our penthouse, 'way up in the sky . . ."



Postscript to Eve

AS WE TOLD YOU, the lead in the story you have just read was played on the air by Lucille Ball; and there is other information about her in the beginning of the magazine which does a very dull job of telling a pleasant anecdote which proves something or other, I am not quite sure what.

I think it was in 1935 or thereabouts that I first met Lucille. I really ought to remember the date better because she is not an easy person to forget, and besides on this occasion I had just had my house burned down, which ought to have made some impression on me. This was in Palm Springs, and I had come home from a movie to find a large crowd gloating over the remains of a conflagration which I had not even had the doubtful fun of witnessing myself. After examining the ruins and deciding that there wasn't much to do about them except look for a new house, the immediate constructive idea followed that some sort of wake was indicated. Sounds of revelry being audible from an adjacent hostelry, we adjourned there and found quite a few friends having a party, which we promptly joined; and among the mob I was introduced to Lucille Ball.

At that time she was a practically unheard-of starlet under contract to RKO. I was also under contract to RKO, who were then making the Saint pictures and causing me much grief in the process.

I immediately became a vociferous rooter for Lucille. While I can't claim to have made a unique discovery I was quite certain even then of the talent and personality which have since put her where she is, and I appointed myself a committee of one to yell loudly that she should get a break. "One day," I said, "I'm going to see that you get in a good picture, if it takes me ten years."

Ten years is a long time; and much sooner than that Lucille parted from RKO without ever making much impression there, and so did I, with about as little satisfaction. Both of us made out pretty well in spite of that; and eventually after almost exactly ten years, both of us were at MGM. I was almost finished with a certain screen play when the producer said to me: "Who do you think ought to play the girl in this?"

"There is only one girl to play it," I said. "That's Lucille Ball."

It is all too seldom that a writer gets listened to in these matters, but this had to be one of those times. Even if she didn't need it by then, it was quite a thing for me when they did give her the lead in that picture, which is now called TWO SMART PEOPLE and will be showing around your neighborhood about the time you read this. As I said, it must prove something or other, I'm not quite sure what.

THE EDITOR